

*Athenian News:*  
O R,  
**Dunton's Oracle.**

From Tuesday July the 25th, to Saturday July the 29th, 1710.

*The Sign-Post* : Written by A. B. C. or the Society of *London-Poets*, and dedicated to *John Dunton, Esq;* Post Master General, of *Great Britain*.

**A**S to the two following Posts, the first was written by A. B. C. (or the Society of *London-Poets*) and the second by *John Dunton*, the first Projector of the 3000 Posts: The *Sign-Post*, (as 'tis but Manners to give Place to my betters) shall take the first Place in *Dunton's Oracle*; and therefore (after blushing a little for those undeserv'd Praises my Poetick Brethren give me) I'll here insert it in their own Words, which were these following, viz.

The *SIGN-POST*.

Vino vendibili non opus est hædera.

For Signs you need not care a Rush,

The Wine that's good does need no Bush.

To *John Dunton, Esq;* Post-Master General of *Great Britain*.

The first Sort of Sustaining Posts, viz. the *Mill-Post*, we have already presented the Publick; the second, that is *Sign-Posts*, require our next Dissertation, which if there is a proportionable Encrease in the Bulk of Signs, to what there has been of late, must be as substantial and thick as the *Mill-Posts*, or else they will not be sufficient to the pondrous Load.

Mr. *Dunton*, The Reputation you have lately gain'd in the learned World, since your eclipsing the famous *Isaac Bickerstaff*, and the Respect I ever had for your Merit, induc'd me to believe you to be the fittest Person that Application could be made to, to put a Stop to an extrava-

gant Humour that has of late Years been predominant among those *Living Hogsheds*, the Country Inn-keepers, and that is, the Largeness of their Signs and Sign-Posts, which for several sufficient and weighty Reasons, I shall in the following Essay upon that Subject, shew to be well worthy the Censure of so great a Pen; I say, so great and so fruitful a Pen; for tho' you are not advanc'd, nor perhaps never may, to the Honour of being Post-Master General, in the General Post-House in *Lombard-Street*, yet sure I am, if he may be said to be Post-Master General that not only sends 3000 several POSTS into the World, but even makes Posts as well as sends 'em abroad; then your Mercurial and weekly Projects, do properly give you the Title of *John Dunton, Esq;* Post-Master General of *Great Britain*; for you not only make Posts (which no Post-Master General ever did before) but even out Post (as to your great Variety of Subjects) the *Post-Man*, *Post-Boy*, *Flying-Post*, *Daily-Post*, and all the lesser or under Flyers. Do but look on the Title Page, (viz. *Athenian News*, or, *Dunton's Oracle* in 3000 Posts.) Here's that will challenge all *Little Britain* and *Duck Lane*; nay, take in the Toppers of *St. Paul's Church-Yard* too, one and all, tho' they were as high as the Steeple, and as big as the *Cupilo*—I'll be try'd by themselves, tho' they seldom commend Copies or Authors, none of their own; I say again, I'll be try'd by themselves (so bold and conscious of it self, true Merit is, as well as Innocence) whether e'er a one of 'em all, ever printed 3000 Posts on as many distinct Subjects. So that in a projecting as well as mystical Sense, *John Dunton, Esq;* may properly be call'd, Post-Master General of *Great Britain*. Then, So, ho, House! Fetch a But of Canary, and let us drink, a Health to *John Dunton, Esq;* Post-Master General of *Great Britain*



Britain; and seeing we have seen Men knighted for weekly Scribbling, may *Dunton* publish *Athenian News*, (or a Diverting Post every Tuesday and Saturday,) till he is knighted as well as his Predecessor, Sir *Roger Lestrangle*; only with this Difference, that *Dunton* writes for the good of his Country, and Sir *Roger* only to please a Party. Then Sir *John Dunton* (if Her Majesty pleases) to whom cou'd A. B. C. (or the Society of London Posts) so properly dedicate their Essay intitl'd the Sign-Post, as to your Mercurial self, who ride *Pegasus* twice a Week, and are Post-Master General to all the Muses, which honourable Title no Man (however prejudic'd) can disown, but is deservedly your Due, that remembers the *Athenian Oracle*, or Question-Project, was a Thought first and entirely your own, and as the Athenian Society had their first Meeting in *Dunton's* Brain, so you were honour'd so far (which shews what a universal Entertainment the World may in Time expect from your Post-Project) as to be chose and continu'd a Member of the Athenian Society, for the whole Time the *Athenian Mercury* was continu'd, and for that Reason, the Athenian Society dedicate their 15th Vol. to Mr. *Dunton*, in the same Manner, as your A. B. C. or Rhiming Brethren now dedicate the Sign-Post, and for the same Reason, viz. as you were the Projector both of the Question and Post-Project.

Having paid a Complement to our Post-Master, 'twill be Time now that we return to our Essay, intitl'd, *The Sign-Post*, which we here dedicate to him, in hopes he'll correct what's amiss in it; for, Mr. *Dunton*, your Judgment is so Nice, and Correspondence, by 3000 Posts, so universal, as that there is nothing which can escape your Cognizance, not only in *Great Britain*, where the Muses have unanimously chose you for their POST-MASTER, but in all the World besides; so that, even, *Sign-Posts* can't escape your particular Notice; and sure we are, a Man whose Correspondence was less general than Mr. *Dunton's*, cou'd never correct half the Sign-Posts in *Great Britain*; for there is within the City of *London*, and in all the Towns of *England*, (which we have past through,) so prodigious a Number of *Sign-Posts*, where they sell a certain Drink call'd *ALE*, that we are apt to think (after a Years Ramble to view the Sign-Posts of *Great Britain*) that half of the Inhabitants may be denominated *Ale-House Keepers*, and if any of these Houses have a green Lattice, or an old Post, it is enough to show their Profession, but if they be

grac'd with a Crown, a Lion, or a Bull, such a *Sign-Post*, if well painted, is a Sign of good Custom, and excellent Liquor.

*Howell* tells us, that the Pictures and Sign-Posts of *Rome*, exceed the Number of living People.

As for *London*, there's scarce a private House but has got its Sign-Post, and as to the Tavern Signs in this famous City, they are as numerous as they are strange and ridiculous; there's Ned of the *Rose*, and Jack of the *King's-Head*, and Dick of the *Globe*, and George of the *Mermaid*, and Will of the *Sun*, and Harry of the *Castle*, and Tom of the *Horn*, and Sam of the *Fountain*, and 200 more we could name, so that to give a Catalogue of the *London Sign-Posts*, would be an impossible Task for any Man, except it were the ingenious *Fuller*, who (as the Author of his Life tells us) was such an observer of Sign-Posts; that in walking from *Aldgate* to *Whitehall*, he'd give you an exact Account of all the Sign-Posts in the same Order they stood.

As these Sign-Posts owe their chief Ornament to Painting, 'twill be proper here to say something of the first Invention of that Art, and what odd and remarkable Sign-Posts were erected in *Egypt*, *Greece* and *Rome*, in the Infancy of Painting.

*Gyges*, as *Pliny* thinks, did first invent and devise Painting and Sign-Posts in *Egypt*: In *Greece*, *Pyrrhus* invented Sign-Posts and Painting according to *Aristotle's* Opinion: But *Theophrastus* saith that *Polygnotus* an *Athenian*, was the first Man that invented Painting, and propos'd Sign-Posts for Taverns and Ale-Houses; yet *Pliny* agrees neither with *Theophrastus*, nor yet with himself, for in his 35th Book he saith, that *Polygnotus* an *Italian*, did first paint Women in single Apparel, and trimmed their Heads with Kalls of sundry Colours, and then sold these Pictures for Sign-Posts; but to whom Sign-Posts and Painting owe their Original, is yet uncertain, for the *Egyptians* say, they had that Art 600 Years before it came to *Greece*; and they of *Greece* affirm it was begun by the *Sicionians*, and some of the *Corinthians*. Albeit all confess, it began of the drawing of a Man with Lines, for when the Daughter of *Deburiaides*, the *Sicionian*, was to take leave of her Sweet Heart, now going to Wars, to comfort her self in his Absence, she took his Picture with a Coal upon the Wall, as the Candle gave the Shadow, which her Father admiring, perfected afterwards; and it was the first Picture and Sign-Post that ever was made; but in process of Time, this drawing of a Man with Lines waxed more sumptuous with Colours, and



and *Raphael an Urbinate*, is very excellent in expressing of lively Images of Men in this Faculty.

What Divinity was in *Zeuxes*, who by Art and Cunning, did rarely counterfeit a *Vine full of Grapes*, that the Fowl of the Air would descend upon it, in hopes to have fed and filled themselves with the Grapes, they were so lively drawn, and of so good Workmanship, and for that Reason there was scarce a Town or Village, in all *Greece*, in which there was not erected a Sign-Post, adorn'd with a Bunch of Grapes.—And *Apelles*, for the Space of Six Years, employ'd all the Vigor and Strength of his Spirit in drawing the Picture of *Venus*, which was so rarely drawn, and endu'd with such an excellent Beauty, that the young Men that came to see it, fell in love with it, as if it had been a living Creature, when they contemplated upon the Rarity and Perfection of so curious a Draught, insomuch that the Picture-Drawer was commanded by Publick Authority and Edict to hide and keep his Picture out of Sight; and being in Length of Time advanc'd for a Sign-Post in *Athens*, it so induc'd the young Men to Corruption, that it was taken down by Order of the Citizens, and never suffer'd after that, to be seen in a Publick Street. But tho' Painting, and consequently Sign-Posts, owe their Rise to such famous Men as *Gyges*, *Phryrus*, *Deburiades*, *Zeuxes*, *Apelles*, yet in the Infancy of Painting, Sign-Posts were so little understood, that they were forc'd to write under every Sign they erected, *This is the Dog*, *this is the Bear*, and *this is the Ship Tavern*, and it must also be own'd, that as we have lost the Art of Painting in Glass, and that Perfection of Limning the Ancients had; so we have lost all good Contrivance in the very erecting of Sign-Posts, and therefore the ingenious Dr. *M. L——r* has in his Book entitul'd *A Journey to Paris*, taken Notice that the Signs in that City, are but a Foot square, and hang very high, that they may not hinder, as he afterwards concludes the entertaining Prospect, that the Streets of that beautiful City afford, and this he says was done by the King of *France's* Order, but then as an *Anti-Journal* observes, how indulgent is our Queen to her Subjects, who permits 'em to have such immense Signs, as the *Castle-Tavern* has in *Fleetstreet*; several others, which like the Consciences of the People, are tolerated to be as big and as monstrous as their Masters please; the first thing therefore they ought to be censured for, is that they spoil the Prospect of the Country Towns, which tho' not so Noble and Majestick,

yet is no less Delightful and Pleasant, than that of the City: The Signs in some Places are grown so monstrous big, as if the whole Town strove for the Custom of some *Senecio Grandio*, that lov'd nothing but what look'd Prodigious. They reach commonly from one Side of the Street to the other, so that several Travellers have been put to the stand many Times to know which Side of the Way the House stood that the Sign belong'd to; I met a Country Man of mine t'other Day, and among other things, asking him what Business brought him up to Town, *Why*, says he, *I'm at Law*; with who, said I, *Why*, with Mr. He——n of S——d, says he, *he has put out such a large Saracen's Head for his Sign, that it frightened my Team of Horses, and made 'em overthrow a Load of Wheat last Tuesday*: Ay, thought I, if this Humour encreases, that every one will have a bigger Sign than his Neighbour, we shall in a few Years see the *Bull Inn* have a Sign as big as the *Dun Cow*; the *Green Man*, will stand a Cross the Road like a *Colossus*; the Master of the Ship will hang out a *Royal Sovereign*, or a Ship as big as the *Celestial Argo*, and which consequently must require a Sign-Post as big and as strong as an *Atlas* to support it.—The ingenious *Hudibras* mentions a certain Lawyer, that

*Made the Dirt 'th' Streets compound,  
For taking up the publick Ground.*

I'm sure the Complaint would be much more just against our enormous Signs, Signs big enough for the Houses where the Planets take up there Inns. How much more modest and witty was a certain Person that having no License to sell Wine, was forc'd to take down his *Bunch of Grapes and Bush*, but instead of that, over his Door writ,—*Good Wine needs no Bush*,—which let every Body know, he sold Wine, and kept up his Custom. Tho' the Toleration granted to Signs, is (as I hinted before) a great Token of the Indulgence of the Government, yet it is a great Grievance to Poor Sign-Posts! Illustrious Sign-Posts! that bear and sustain more various Kinds of Creatures, than either Earth, Air, or Sea, Mermaids and Griffins; and *St. Georges* and Maids, Illustrious as they are, they beg (Mr. *Danton*) that you'd redress their Ills, since none so proper as your self, who, as your fruitful Brain is able to invent and publish 3000 Posts, must needs know how to reform one; but it is impossible to paint in suitable Colours, either their Deserts, or their Misfortunes.



But how can we expect Sign-Posts of a fit Size, adorn'd with proper Paint and Figures, and contriv'd so as to answer the true End of Sign-Posts; or in plainer Words, how can we expect a Reformation amongst Sign-Posts, when both Men and Women too, that erect 'em are a sort of living and fallacious Sign-Posts: How common is it to see a strutting Prodigal, powder and curle, and even Paint (sometimes) to angle for Admirers? Is it not a manly Exercise to see a Coxcomb stand licking his Lips into Rubies, Painting his Cheeks into Cherries, patching his Pimpenits, Carbuncles and Buboos; to see him *striving* to out-do *Apelles* in counterfeiting the lovely Eye-brow, to be two long Hours in careening his Hair and Peruke, and perhaps, as tedious in adjusting his Cravat-String, for no other End but (Sign-Post like) to tempt the She-Passengers to his lewd Embraces, for being thus equipp'd, the good natur'd Animal, fancies every Woman in love with him, that casts an Eye on his accomplish'd Phisnomy, and Antick Drefs.

Thus Man's a Sign-Post, and he hugs the Cheat,  
And still the Pleasure lies in the Deceit.

And as to the Women (if we'll believe *Hudibras*) they are all Painted Sign-Posts.

For 'tis in vain to think to guess,  
At Women by Appearances;  
That paint and patch their Imperfections,  
Of intellectual Complexions,  
And daub their Tempers o'er with Washes,  
As Artificial as their Faces: (Chin,)  
When Maids thus paint their Minds and  
They make but *Sign-Posts* of their Skin,  
To tell us what they sell within.

It is no little Wonder to see a Picture have Motion, and a Female Sign-Post is such a one, who hath almost found the secret of that famous Necromancer, that pretended to grow young again, by shutting himself in a Glass Viol, since all that hath made our Tempting Sign-Post appear so fair, comes from the Alembick, Waters, Essences, and Painting, and therefore fond Youth, beware, for where the good Face lies in the Gally-Pot, it is rather a Vizer (or Sign-Post to call in Travellers) than a Face that thy Mistress wears.

*How did I doat!* The Gold upon her Head,  
The Lillies of her Breasts, the Rosie Red  
In either Cheek, and all her other Riches (witches,  
Wherewith she bleareth Sight, and Sense be-  
Is none of hers, it is but borrow'd Stuff,  
Or stoln, or bought, plain Counterfeit in proof:

My charming Angel I did so adore,  
Is but a Sign-Post newly varnish'd o'er.

With what Confidence dares she lift up her Countenance to Heaven, which her Maker acknowledges not. This Picture of a Picture, or painted Sign-Post, call'd Woman, is a Creature that had need to be twice defined, for she is not what she seems: She seldom goes without a Pair of Faces, and she's furnish'd with Stuff to make more, if need be: her own sweet Face is the Book she most looks upon, this she reads over every Morning, especially if (being a Vintner's Sign-Post) she is to serve at the Bar that Day; and as her Eye or Servant teaches her, sometimes she blots out Pale, and writes Red.

Some thro' all hunted Natures Secrets trace,  
To fill the Furrows of a wrinkl'd Face;  
But after all their Toil (pray mark the Curse)  
They've only made that which was bad, much  
As some in striving to make ill Coin pass, (worse.  
Have but the more discover'd that 'twas Brass.  
Nay, those that are reputed to be fair,  
And know how courted, how admir'd they are,  
Who one would think God had form'd so compleat  
They had no need to make his Gifts a Cheat;  
Yet they too in adulteration share,  
And wou'd be Sign-Posts, tho' so young and fair.

But the Face she makes i'th' the Day to draw in Customers, she usually mars i'th' Night, and so is to make anew the next Day, for tho' the Proverb says, *Good Wine needs no Bush*, yet her Husband (poor contented Man) finds she draws in more Customers, by being set at the Bar, than his t'other Sign that he hangs in the open Street: So that his best Sign-Post is a handsome Wife; and therefore her Head is dress'd, and hung about with Toys and Devices, like the Sign of his Tavern, to draw on such as see her, and sometimes is writ on her Forehead, (as on the *Dolphin* at *Cambridge*, in Capital Letters,) *Like, or look off.*

Thus painted Women are Sign-Posts to decoy,  
The rambling Man, and the fond thoughtless Boy.  
But from such painted Sign-Posts strait retire,  
They're *French*, perhaps, and such lodge inward  
Yes, for the Plague of *Adam's* fall'n Race, (Fire:  
These rotten Sign-Posts have an Angel's Face;  
For Woman's Tongue and Eyes did ne'er declare,  
What lies within to ruin and ensnare.  
Woman's a well complexion'd and seeming Saint,  
Only made up of Powder, Patch and Paint;  
A painted Tomb, that entertains within,  
No other Guests but Rottenness and Sin:  
A crafty Cheat—*Decoy*—a meer Trepan,  
A Sign-Post, made to tempt in foolish Man.